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NINA F. LAVARD



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Dorothy Whylehead
with love
from Aunt Nellie
May 2 1892

P O E M S

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P O E M S

BY

NINA F. LAYARD



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TO MY DEAR FATHER

ADVERTISEMENT

I WISH to acknowledge the kind courtesy of those editors who have consented to the reprint of poems which have already appeared in their magazines.

‘A March Howl,’ ‘The Rout of the Rooks,’ and ‘For Life’ were published in *Longman’s Magazine*.

‘A Snow Sonnet’ and ‘A Legend of the Sky Watchers’ appeared in *Harper’s Magazine*.

In the three poems ‘An Artifice,’ ‘The Poppy King,’ and ‘God for god’ I have intentionally borrowed metres respectively adopted by Buchanan and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In any other case I have done so unconsciously. ‘Isadore’ bears a certain resemblance to ‘The Lady of the Lea,’ though the metre is not the same.

N. F. L.

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DOMINE, PROBASTI.

PART I.

Scene I.—A Student's Bedroom at a University. FRANCIS asleep ; MINISTERING ANGEL and SPIRIT OF REMORSE in attendance.

MINISTERING ANGEL. Ah ! let him sleep awhile ;
the morn shall bring
Too soon, alas ! alas ! the bitter sting.

REMORSE. My bitter sting.

MINISTERING ANGEL. And all the golden store
Of boasted innocence—

REMORSE. Be his no more.

MINISTERING ANGEL. Wait yet awhile, O stern,
relentless sprite ;

Look not upon him ; see, my wing is white,
And over him I spread it with soft care,
And fan his pulsing brow, and stir his hair.
How damp it clings ! that yestermorning rolled
In glossy waves about his forehead bold.

FRANCIS (*half waking*). Now do I wake at last !
The awful night is past,

DOMINE, PROBASTI

With dreams of hellish pain.
 I am God's child again !
 I am God's son, I know,
 And upright will I go,
 Nor ever shall foul shame
 Dishonour my fair name.

[Sleeps again with an expression of peace on
 his face.]

MINISTERING ANGEL. To soul so pure how
 terrible the blot !

I charge you, awful spirit, wake him not.

REMORSE. Nay, but he must awake, and sadly
 know

That he who sleeps with Sin must wake with Woe.

[He approaches the bed ; his shadow falls on the face of the
 sleeper.]

MINISTERING ANGEL (*weeping*). Not yet ! not
 yet ! but give me time to pray.

I may not kiss his lips, but I would lay,
 If God so willed, my hand upon their door
 And stop his mortal breath for ever more,
 Then straightly bear his blessed soul away
 To purer mansions and a cleaner day.

REMORSE. Indeed it may not be ; for finest gold
 The furnace must be heated sevenfold.

Past purity shall make the trespass foul
Show black against the whiteness of his
soul.

FRANCIS (*moving uneasily*). I thought the
night had fled,

And from my bed
Upleaping like a soul new-born
I met the morn ;
And with a pride of grace,
Because His face
Had shined upon me where I lay,
I hailed the day.

I thought the blessed light,
That all the night
Lay sleeping like a tired child,
Awoke and smiled ;
Till every cloudlet blushed
Like sweet cheeks flushed,
Nor ever dreaming of offence
'Gainst innocence.

Yet once again I feel
A horror steal !
And once again I seem to know
A shapeless woe !
Why are my eyes so dim
For sight of Him ?

DOMINE, PROBASTI

And when I call He answers not !
Am I forgot ?

[He raises himself and looks round.]

What do I find ?
What is it clouds my mind
With half-remembered wrong ?
Does this belong
To woeful fancies of the brain
O'erwrought with mental strain ?
Or can it be
I wake indeed to see
Myself a blot—a curse
In God's fair universe ?

[He leaps from the bed, and stands gazing wildly
out into the east, where light begins to break.]

What have I done ?
O God ! if this be true,
Blot out Thy sun,
Nor ever in the year's amount
Let this day count.
O God ! if this be true,
Let this day's morning
Fail of its dawning,
Or, as a threaded bead that some fair girl
Impatient tossed,

Drop like a broken pearl

And so be lost.

O God ! God !—God !

I am undone—undone !

Wrath has begun :

This is Thy rod.

Oh, bitterness of sin,

That man lets in

To his soul's stain,

Nor ever can be clean again !

Alas ! alas ! my mother !

And my sweet sister,

And you, my brother !

How have I wronged you all

By my black fall.

Gape at me, hell !

Laugh at me, cruel fiends, as once ye laughed

When Judas fell.

How like in this :

I have betrayed the Master with a kiss.

[He falls prone on the ground. REMORSE bends over him; the ANGEL again interposes her wing.]

Scene II.—A Street in the University Town. FRANCIS walking hurriedly and with bowed head.

FRANCIS. Stern eye of the sun,
Sad eye of the moon ;
Eyes of the stars and flowers ;
Morning, and night, and noon,
I have felt your sorrowful gaze,
Your rapt, immovable gaze,
Amazed with my soul's amaze.
The sun is my father's eye
In pitiful majesty
Looking on my despair.
The sad white moon is no other
Than the eye of my sad mother,
And when the stars shine fair
I catch with a swift surprise
A glance from my brother's eyes.
Then I turn my gaze to the ground,
Where the trailing weeds are found
And the pink convolvulus creeps ;
But the gentle flowers look up
With a tear in every cup,
And I know that my sister weeps.

[He pauses at a church door, but hesitates to enter.
A hand is laid on his shoulder, and he recognises his friend TERENCE.]

TERENCE. Come, brother Francis, we have
missed your face
From the accustomed place,
Your fellow-students question me in vain
To know the cause of pain,
And why you walk with slow and heavy tread
And bending of your head.
It is not good to nurse a secret woe ;
I pray you do not so.
Nay, dearest brother, for your soul's relief
Unbosom me this grief.

FRANCIS. If any spoken word
By mortal heard
Could break the spell
That chains my soul to hell,
If guilt confessed
Could make my spirit blessed
With holy light,
As heretofore when I did walk upright,
Then would I stand,
And with uplifted hand,
To summon all,
And voice so loud and dread
As might awake the dead,
Confess my fall.

TERENCE. Alas ! your soul is sick.

I pray you, friend,
To enter now the quiet church, and bend
Full lowly at His footstool who imparts
His absolution to all humble hearts.

FRANCIS. Can prayer undo my deed ?
Then will I plead
Till the rent sky,
Torn with my agony,
Shall answer to my need.

[They enter the church together.]

Choir singing.

Searcher of hearts, in vain we fly
The terrors of Thy scrutiny ;
Searcher of hearts, in vain we plot
To find the land where Thou art not.

Wings of the morning would I take,
So sad the bed in hell I make ;
If I ascend Thy holy hill,
Searcher of hearts, I find Thee still.

[FRANCIS seats himself, repeating the words—]

‘Searcher of hearts, I find Thee still.’

Scene III.—The Church. REMORSE, disguised as a preacher, enters the pulpit.

REMORSE. A message from the Lord ! a spoken word !

In visions of my head upon my bed ;
For this way went the Spirit of the Lord
To speak with me, and thus and thus He said :
'To you, O son of man, it hath been given,
To learn the awful mystery of pain :
Through death to look on life,
Through hell to heaven,
From present fall and loss to final gain.'

And I beheld, and lo ! the eye of day
Was dim with sorrow, and a weeping wind
Disturbed the heavy boughs, to creak and sway,
Till all the hanging greenery did find
A grief that must be uttered ; and I heard,
And lo ! a sudden shivering of the leaves,
That loosely smote together, and a bird
Flashed swiftly upwards to the sheltering eaves ;
Then dropt a feather, brightened by her blood,
Her tender bosom's blood. 'O God !' I cried,
'O God ! it was to save her callow brood
She hovered wistful and the bolt defied !'

And even as I spake a murmured sound
Of groaning anguish, or of wild despair ;
And might be shrill, or hoarse, so muffled round
And deadened was it by the heavy air ;
But ever gathered strength, and filled the land
With howling misery, an awful wave
That swept to where I stood, and licked my hand
With shuddering sense of coldness and the grave.
And with the vague uncertainty of dreams
That are, and yet are not, now lost or found,
So to my puzzled sense the vision seems
A thing of sight, or touch, anon of sound.
And these are faces that before were sighs ;
And blankness of unutterable woe
Hath quenched the kindling beauty of young eyes ;
And youthful feet, how heavily they go !
For everywhere is sorrow, and unrest,
And living torture, crueler than death,
That must be carried in a living breast ;
And lips shall pale that cannot yield their breath.
And there are smothered cries, for wounded things
Look up, in dumb astonishment of pain,
Or print the sodden earth with trailing wings,
That never more shall brush the air again.

And, as I mused upon them, suddenly

A trembling horror took me, and I wailed,
 'Is love of God exchanged for cruelty,
 And have the springs of His compassion failed?'

A voice said, 'Cry,' and lo ! another voice
 Obediently made answer, and thus spake :
 'What shall I cry ?' and He, 'There is no choice,
 For all creation groaneth, and doth make
 Sore travail, waiting for the blessed time,
 Of ultimate adoption. Therefore say,
 "All flesh is grass, and glory most sublime
 Is flower of grass and withereth away.
 Moreover be it known that human woe
 Doth ever follow closely human sin ;
 Who opens to admit the deadly foe
 Hath never failed to let that other in."'

FRANCIS (*repeating the words to himself*). 'Hath
 never failed to let that other in' !

REMORSE (*continuing*). Hearken to me, O ye who
 with rash lips

Charge God with wantonness, and would eclipse
 The light of His serene beneficence.
 Hearken and learn, O ye whose impious speech
 Hath dared the Judge of all men to impeach ;
 Lie lowly in the dust, and mark from whence came this
 That ye have read amiss.

In visions of my head
Upon my bed
Thus did I see,
And thus it was revealed to me :

Hand in hand
Came Death and Sin
From the far-off land,
The land of sorrow,
Where no to-morrow
May let Hope in.
Hand in hand
They passed out
From the rebel rout,
From the noise and riot
Into the quiet
Of the fields of Space,
Where no place
Could ever be found
For the dreadful sorrow sound.
What do they, this truant pair ?
From the portal whence they came
Tongues of flame
Lick out into the air ;
From the region whence they hail,
Gaunt and pale,

Cometh a long-drawn wail
Of infinite despair.

O earth ! earth ! that hangs
Bright in the dreadful vast,
Now they drop unto thee,
Plotting to undo thee,
Fast—fast—fast !

Their black wings find no rest
Upon the scanty ether,
Ploughed by no bird's breast,
Ruffled by no feather.

Behold ! behold ! behold !
They have found thee, and they wait
Impatient at the gate,
As a wolf before the fold.

They have found thee, ah ! poor earth !
So fair and so untried
In thy newly-modelled pride
And the glory of thy birth ;
And they pause awhile to see
What warder holds the key.

Ah ! who is this that comes with dainty finger
To ope the door where still the shadows linger,
Whose airy footing leaves the sprouting green
All velvet smooth, as though no step had been ?

Ah ! who is this that lightly to her fall
Doth trip and go ?
I weep, and know—
Sad Eve, alas ! the mother of us all ;
Sad Eve, the mother of all living called :
I learn, appalled,
The mother of all dead that are to be ;
Of her dead Abel
One day to know herself the mother !
And his sad brother,
Dark Cain, who slew him darkly, and must flee
Where shadows sable
May haply hide him and his infamy.

O fellow men ! behold ! behold ! and wonder ;
Hearken ! and understand.
When flew the gates of Paradise asunder
'Twas by a woman's hand.
For, all transfigured as an angel, Sin
Stood pleading,
Nor ever wist she of that deadly twin
That followed at his leading.

FRANCIS (*covering his face*). Alas ! transfigured
as an angel, Sin
Stood pleading,
Nor ever wist I of that deadly twin

That follows at her leading.

REMORSE (*continuing*). And even as one waking,
who in vain

Would find again

The vision that eludes him, so my eyes

Awoke to blindness of that other world.

For shuf eyes see in dreams, and vision flies
The lifting day, with shadowy pinions furled.

And all about me woke the common day,
The common staring day, whose harsher lines
The common light defines ;
And where this picture ends we know, or where,
again,

That other hath beginning is made plain.
And sound is of the ear, and tethered sight
Must find its limit in the visual orb,
With straightened circumstance of partial light
That favouring planes absorb.

Thus died the vision, but my spirit built
From out the tumbled ruin of my dream
A structured knowledge, that did grow and seem
The twofold mystery of Pain and Guilt.

PART II.

Scene I.—Midnight. A House in Wiltshire. FRANCIS
restlessly pacing his chamber.

FRANCIS. Now my poor heart must play the
pendulum,
And count each measure of this heavy night,
With its own tired swinging, left to right,
 And right to left again, to tell the sum
 Of souls that pass in death, and souls that come
Reluctant earthward from th' unshadowed light ;
Come weeping into life, to learn aright
 The lessons of their new curriculum.

So full of pain my heart, so full of pain
The muffled murmur of the growing sound ;
 Ah me, for new-born life and coming stain !
For death, ah me ! and lying in the ground,
 Ashes to ashes, earth to earth again,
While all the woolly darkness gathers round.

Scene II. A River bordered by a Wood. FRANCIS walking by the bank; MINISTERING ANGEL and SPIRIT OF REMORSE in attendance.

FRANCIS. The years may come and the years may go,

But I stretch my hand to an empty sky,

If the stars are not clean in His sight

How can a mortal man be white

While sin is sin, and I am I,

Though the years may come and the years may go?

Is it living to move and breathe,

Now to forget, and now again

To know the sting of eternal pain—

Eternal pain, and eternal stings,

And the worm that gnaws at the root of things?

Is it living to move and breathe?

I wake up at the dead of night,

When the quiet world hath shut her ears:

Waketh a bird in the early dawn

And singeth her song 'Forlorn! forlorn!'

And only my sorrow stirs and hears

In the cold of the sad half-light.

Spirit of God, that strives with men,

Strive not thus with me night and day.

Shall the strife end never, never,
 My soul for rock that an iron pen
 Cutteth and graveth in lead for ever
 With the name of my sin and my soul's dismay?

God, I am weary of life !

O God, take from me this sad thing that men call
 living ;

Not to forget doth prove Thee unforgiving.

God, I am weary of life !

Deep and cool and dark and strong is the river
 That brims and passes,
 And a tiny breeze hath set the weeds a-shiver,
 And the long sad grasses.

What if I plunge within,
 And sinking there,
 Wash my body of sin,
 My soul of despair ?

Oh, to feel the wave on my temples throbbing,
 Cooler than churchyard earth, and to hear the sound,
 The last sound in my ears, of the water sobbing
 Like some kind maid over the hapless drowned !
 Ah ! I would stretch at ease on so sweet a pillow.
 And the river should kiss me to death, as a doting
 lover

Finding my lips and touching them over and over,
Till I fall asleep at the last in the shade of the willow.

[HELGA suddenly appears from the wood behind him.]

HELGA. Forgive me if it seem a thing too bold
Thus to address you, who am all unknown,
But as I paused to root a marigold
In yonder avenue your voice was blown
Adown the carrier-wind, and reached my ear
Heavy with sorrows pitiful to hear.

FRANCIS (*turning aside fearfully without looking up*). Ah, lady, heard you me? It is a trick
My voice hath learnt of late, for spirits sick
Let drop their thoughts in words, and talk to stones,
When God and man disowns.

HELGA. God doth disown us never; though He
chide
He will not keep His anger.

FRANCIS (*huskily*). He will hide
By night and day, will cover up His face,
That not one ray of grace
Steal through for comfort. He will smite the foe
That is already down,
And tread his crown
Into the ashes—so!

[He brings his foot down heavily on a drooping flower and crushes it into the earth.]

HELGA (*aside*). I fear his look, and yet I cannot leave

The stranger thus. The river runneth full,
With sucking sounds that seem to draw and pull
His harried soul !

FRANCIS (*continuing as if to himself*). I hear their voices call !

Soft voices from the shallows of the stream,
Deep voices, as the voices of a dream,
I hear them cry and call,
'Come to us, poor heart breaking with the sadness
Of God-forsaken grief !
Come to us, poor brain burning with a madness
Beyond relief !'

Gently, gently the ripples eddy and curl,
About the brown leaves shifting ;
They are turning now and lifting
To the strong water-swirl.
Would I were leaf or twig to float as they
Quietly down the stream, away and away
Past the woods and out to the meadows lazy,
Green with grass and pranked with poppy and
daisy.
There, where the banks are frayed with river
sedges,
Great brown cattle, leaning over the edges,

Draw deep comfort without stint or stand,
And bow their foreheads rough for blessing of the land.

[FRANCIS moves nearer to the river's edge, with his hand to his head. HELGA follows.]

FRANCIS (*continuing*). O great kind river, you will hold me soon.

Dear mother-hand, I feel your fingers press
My tortured brow to smoothness of a swoon.
Oh, strong caress !

Tender as strong. To thee I yield and yearn ;
In thee, sweet stream, I trust, and gladly turn
From every comfort other.

God was my Father stern,
Thou art my mother.

HELGA. Trust Him who made the stream, and loves to fling
His gracious pity over everything.

FRANCIS (*turning hastily*). I pray you leave me, lady : God and I
Have quarrelled, and His ways your words belie.
I loved Him once. Oh ! how I loved Him ! Now
He sits in wrath, and bids the ploughers plough.
I loved Him once with loyal heart devout ;
He shut Himself in heaven and left me out.

HELGA. Yet if you knock He surely will attend.

FRANCIS (*wildly*). Ay, I will knock once more,
when this clenched hand

Beats on the startled water ; if He send
His angel to me I shall understand.

MINISTERING ANGEL (*to SPIRIT OF REMORSE*). Ah !
speed me to him ere the fatal leap ;
God gives His angels charge the ways to keep
Of His elect.

REMORSE. Do thou direct
The action of the woman ; 'tis the hour
When ghostly darkness hath him in its power.

FRANCIS (*continuing*). Close is the air, but cool
the river's breath :
Oh, agony of life ! oh, bliss of death !
God, I can bear no more , Thy arrows stieck
Fast in my shrinking flesh ; the head is sick
And the whole heart is faint. Forgive the deed ;
That frees my spirit as a bird is freed.

[He walks on hurriedly towards a bridge that spans the
river.]

HELG A (*clasping her hands in terror*). Now do I
think my leaping heart will burst
For impotence to save him, or restrain
His tortured spirit's rashness, if he gain
The bridge's dreadful height I fear the worst.
What if I cry
Aloud to God, who listens from the sky ?

SPIRIT OF REMORSE (*to MINISTERING ANGEL*). My work is almost over ; for the rest, God speed thee, gentle spirit. Do thy best.

HELGA. If I should pray, perchance in very deed His God will send an angel to his need.

[She prays.]

MINISTERING ANGEL. I thought his hour had come, but now behold A rifting of the clouds, and shafts of gold Straight from the burning glory touch his brow And make a halo. Lo ! she prayeth now, This angel woman, and her prayer has found The blessed Heart of God.

REMORSE. I hear a sound Of hurrying pinions. See ! from out the height There hastes a messenger with anxious flight, And the great sweeping of the seraph wings Hath set the dancing water all in rings.

MINISTERING ANGEL. I will go meet him, for he bears a word Shall teach her wisdom : thus the prayer is heard.

[HELGA rises from the ground where she was kneeling and hastens along the river bank.]

HELGA. I see the stranger stand with arms uplift To make the plunge. The river runneth swift.

Now help me, God ! If I should dare the stream
 And leap therein, he, waking from his dream
 Of tortured anguish, may forget the mood
 In strong desire to save me from the flood.

[She pauses for a moment, looking fearfully at the river.]

If I should dare the stream ! but, oh ! the heart
 Sinks in my bosom. 'Tis an awful thing
 To cast off life, and carelessly to fling
 Aside the many-coloured temple veil
 That keeps with woven grace of texture frail
 The holy from the Holiest apart.
 A fearful thing ! Yet, oh ! to see him die !
 It cannot be ! Now from Thy throne on high
 Hear me, O Christ ; into Thy safe control
 Thus I commit my body and my soul.

[She throws herself off the steep bank into the river.
 FRANCIS leaps in after her, and they are both borne down
 by the stream.]

MINISTERING ANGEL (*weeping*). Fails the light
 from the day.

In the fields of fading gold,
 Like a sheep that has gone astray,
 Like a lamb that has lost its fold,
 Lingers a solitary cloud,
 White as the lawn of a dead man's shroud.
 Fails my heart, for, behold,

There in the hurrying tide
They are tossing side by side.
Is it for life or for death?
I see the wild stroke of a hand.
Lo ! they are nearing the land :
But the terrible current beneath
Is drawing and sucking them in.
Now, will he falter or win?
Heavily on his breast
Leaneth the death-blue maid,
And the feathery surf is frayed
Like a breaker's hoary crest
Where an ocean boils and brims
For the sweep of his mighty limbs
Is churning the foam to yeast.

REMORSE. Fear not, Spirit of Love.
From the heart of the water-bed
I heard him whisper a prayer,
And the glory is on his head,
For the Lord has found him there.
Though the weeds may wrap and tie
Cling and cover and lace,
Yet they cannot dim the eye
That has seen the Holy Place.
Fear not, Spirit of Love.

PART III.

Scene— Mid-air. MINISTERING ANGEL pausing in flight above a wood where FRANCIS is seen walking.

MINISTERING ANGEL. A year has passed,
and once again

The ever-watchful Father, God,
Bids me speed earthward ; and I know
I shall not weep for wrath or woe,
Or witness to the bitter pain
Of breaking heart and wielded rod.
The changing seasons came and fled
A wave that washed the shores of time,
And first the flowers and then the rime
Made beautiful the forest dead ;
And once again the trees display,
To sky above and earth beneath,
The glories that were hid away
In folded bud and glossy sheath.
O heart that knew a wintry spell,
A barren time of blasting care,

When all the summer leafage fell
And left a forest brown and bare,
For you at beauty of the dawn
The hanging shadows lift and roll,
On you there breaks a fairer morn,
The flowery season of the soul.

FRANCIS (*soliloquising*). I live to-day.
I had not known erewhile
How earth could smile ;
I had not seen the play
Of moving waters,
Or the patterned light
That passing shadows wrought as
They flashed by in feathery flight.
I had not traced
The circled pools of brightness,
By gloom of chestnut left
Where shadows deft
Did weave a skilful framing for the whiteness.
With leafage interlaced.
I live—I live !
If I have lived before
I know not clearly ; only this I know :
That very poorly did I go
With clumsy outstretched hands, that blindly felt

Along the walls
Of nature's sculpture halls ;
That very slavishly I knelt
Where now I cast myself for evermore,
And worship is a joy to give.
Ah ! I was blind,
And could but dimly find
The glories of the great Eternal Mind.
Ah ! I was cold,
And dare not make so bold
As touch the border of His falling skirts
Whose virtue heals our hurts.
But now I feel
Such blessedèd unction steal
Into my being's core,
Such joy unknown before
That wakes the pulse of my most living life
To love and to adore,
And stills the cruel strife
For evermore.
I said,
'If He shall send an angel,' and behold
There sped
One with a woman's form, but angel eyes
And heart made bold
For grace of sacrifice.

And it was heaven I read on that sweet brow.
And it is Christ that, risen even now,
From out the sepulchre of stone, my heart,
Walks evermore in loveliness and grace—
He who was laid a little while apart
With shrouded face.

And as a flower from out the breaking sod
Uplifts a slender stem, and yearns to God,
So did my buried faith revive and grow,
So did my hope-flower lost
Live through its frost,
And fashioned living snowdrops of the snow.

Said God to man, 'If you would know of Me
Know Love.' And thus He comes,
This Spirit Guest,
And in the humble homes
Of righteous lovers doth abide and rest.
Yet oftentimes they know Him not, and lean
Each to the other, till the Lord unseen
Blessing their bread, they suddenly are ware
Of His sweet presence, and He deigns to share
The simple feast.
To me at least
Thus came the blessed Sacrament, for He

Who sometime spake in thunder fell to wooing
My wayward spirit from its own undoing.

There is a day that every human heart
Must know apart,
A day more blest
Than any other day ;
A day of days,
Not reckoned with the rest ;
Hedged in from common ways.

Such day I knew when, from the dreadful stream
Emerging, as a sleeper from a dream,
Who all night long has tossed in horrid fears,
With din of rushing water in my ears,
And all the dizzy tumult of the flood
Still beating on my brain, I climbed and stood,
A breathing man, upon the river shore,
And knew the tender woman form I bore
Would move and breathe again as heretofore.

Long time I waited, as the watchers wait
When in the east a spectre light begun
Still lingers at the gate
Th' expected sun.
It came at length, the long-drawn doubtful sigh,
A fluttering wave that heaved her bosom's snow

As water lilies curtsey to the flow
Of hidden currents when the floods are high.
I knew she lived. I knew that I should meet
The wonder of her eyes, for now a tinge,
Faint as of woodland rose, and all as sweet,
Glowed on her cheek, and there the lashes' fringe,
That swept adown,
Trembled and stirred like river reeds wind-blown.

O my beloved ! O my heart's best good !
God sent His angel, and I understood.

THE DEAD DAY.

SHADOW of shadows,
Night of dark day,
Veil thyself closely ;
Let not one ray
Pierce through the darkness,
Strike through the gloom,
Where the Day lieth
In the Day's tomb.
He died in battle
Crimson and red,
The great Sun-lover
Of Day that is dead.
‘ Why should I longer
Live in my pain?’
Cried the Day, viewing
How he fell slain,
How he fell covered
With glory and gore,
Till the sea reddened
That licked the red shore,

Till with the fury
Of blades lifted high
All the death tokens
Splashed to the sky,
And the young cloudlets,
Timid of mood,
Fled through the heavens,
Stained with his blood.
Day drew her curtain
To shut out the sight,
Laid her down weeping,
And died into night.

WHOM THE STRIKE STRUCK.

MY eyes are dry, my heart is full of tears :
I see the faces of the hungry poor,
That crawl below my feet,
Look upward from the street,
Laid as the paving of a rich man's floor,
So mean the level of their state appears.

Look not upon me, O ye white-faced throng,
Or look not thus, as though of common blood
That fills our English veins
No vestige now remains,
Of the great life-stream's universal flood,
The brotherhood immortalised of song.

There is a grief that only monarchs know,
A crowning sorrow circled by a crown.

Ye that in wrath look up,
And curse the golden cup,
Are there not tears on faces that look down,
Rain from above, as dew is from below ?

Is there no pity in the heart of kings,
That pains to be delivered of its ruth,

Yet cannot find a way,
Strive for it as he may?

For ragged falsehood bars the way of truth
And intercepts the bread that bounty flings.

If ye could know, O poor, if ye could gauge
The careful heart that under ermined robe

Beats pitiful and pure,
And breaks to find a cure

For all the bitter pains that pierce and probe,
And all the cramping wrongs of work and wage,

Not then would hatred score its cruel lines
On features where the iron pen of woe

Had left perchance a space,
Not all devoid of grace,

A little fencèd field for smiles to grow,
A grateful spot where wreathèd nature twines.

Alas for kings unbrothered of their folk !
Alas for men unfriended of their kings !

For strife of serf and sire
God give us Christian hire,

And all the blessedèd peace that justice brings
And all the gentle thrall of mercy's yoke.

THE SUN PAINTER.

BUSILY the sun has worked
All the day to paint the world ;
Lilies where the honey lurked,
Poppies smooth and roses curled.

All the daisies were at play
In and out among the grass,
And they hid themselves away
When they saw the painter pass ;

But he brushed their petal-tips,
Peeping from the hiding-place :
You may see the rosy lips
On the pretty daisy face.

And he threw a bag of gold,
Sudden as a thunder clap,
Just as much as it could hold
Into every daisy lap.

He was hurried when he came
To the waiting poppy bed,
So he took a splash of flame
And he burnt the poppies red.

FOR LIFE.

(*Longman's Magazine*, Jan. 1890.)

A FIGHT for his life with a horse !
A man, for his life, with a horse !
A terrible grappling of strong young arms,
Lusty, but almost o'erpowered.
Life or Death in the struggle !
Life, full-pulsing and joyous,
A young man's life in its spring-tide,
Or Death—still-faced and grey.

Ah ! see you not 'tis a groom,
Who is training a vicious brute
From the stud of my Lady Diana ?
Yes—but a groom loves life,
And now he must fight for it madly,
With clenched teeth, grim in their setting,
And dark eyes glittering fiercely,
While he feels his muscles relaxing.

All very well in the Gardens,
Where there is space sufficient,
But before him the Park gates widen,
And all the stream of a city
Pours into Piccadilly.

As in a vision he sees it,
That swirling, eddying torrent ;
Lo ! now it runs like blood,
Slowly and sluggishly here,
Blocked by excess of traffic.
As in a vision he sees it,
Heavy and thick and slow-moving,
Crawling, creeping before him,
Right in the teeth of his coming,
His terrible, headlong on-coming.

Is it a horse he is riding
Or the demon of Death incarnate,
That with wide nostril distended,
And wicked hot ears back-turning,
Gathers its awful strength,
From foam-wreathèd flank to shoulder ?
Now for one mighty endeavour !
One more bracing of sinews !
If the brute conquer at last

He shall know he'd a man to deal with ;
He shall know, by the bloody mouthpiece,
By the sudden grip as of iron,
Throwing him back on his haunches,
While the red spume shows redder,
Flung in the face of the rider.

He shall know it, though he recover,
Mad with the strength of his fury,
Pausing only a moment
To gather fresh force for the on-leap,
And to plough his horrid passage
Through that sullen human river.

Now for muscle to muscle !
Now for the final contest !
But the rider's cheek it is ashen,
And the fearful grip on the curb rein
Is the clutch of his stiffening fingers.
A fight for his life, with a horse !
A man, for his life, with a horse !
The groom of the Lady Diana—
Yes, but a man for all that.
Call him a man for one minute,
Give him some brief adulation ;
If he be king or servant

It will matter little directly ;
Monarchs and grooms turn to clay,
And we speak softly of either,
With reverent pity of either.
A man—not a groom for one minute.

What—is the tragedy over?
They are crowding about the gateway.
Follow and learn the sequel,
How a groom fought with the devil !
How a young man fell fighting !
How a king died in the battle !
Yes—a king—do not wonder
Though I say it with sudden passion.
Ah !—I am sick. Is it over?
Constable, say, did you see it ?
Did you see—the—king—fall ?
The young man—whatever you call him,
The groom of the Lady Diana ?
What do they say, the people ?
'Somebody caught at the bridle,
Just as his strength gave over,
Somebody caught at the bridle !'

Here through the crowd disparted
Who is this that comes striding ?

Monarch or groom that comes striding?
Demon or horse is he leading?
See! the brute noses him kindly,
Asks of him dumb forgiveness.
Poor silly horse—not a demon!
Poor tired boy—not a monarch!
Now Heaven defend you, young hero,
Though you may stammer and redden
Because the horse had the best of it.
Well—yes, the brute is a beauty;
And you—why, you did your duty
And God will take care of the rest of

BY THE SHORE.

TO know the secret of the sea
And hear the tale it tells,
And why with broken filigree
Lie all the scattered shells ;

To learn the story of the shore,
Of pebbles rolled and worn
And why to shreds for evermore
The seaweed lace is torn--

I walk and ponder, musing still
Of God and good, of hate and ill.

AN ARTIFICE.

NOT any more shall word of mine entreat
And thou my suit deny ;
Not any more shall scorn and sorrow meet,
Or love await reply
In patient, bootless pain.
The dream is ended, and the visions fleet ;
The pageant has gone by ;
Not any more shall word of mine entreat
And thou my suit deny ;
Not any more again.

It may be in the twilight soft and sweet
I shall your form descry ;
Yet word of mine shall never more entreat,
And thou my suit deny
In pitiless refrain.
I shall not pass you by with lingering feet
Or longing, restless eye,
For never more shall look of mine entreat

And thou my suit deny,
Or I my fate complain.

Think not to glory in my love's defeat
With smiles that still defy ;
For lips of mine shall never more entreat,
And thou my suit deny
And yet my heart enchain.
No after echo shall the sound repeat
Of woe's most bitter cry,
Nor any more shall tears of mine entreat,
And thou my suit deny
And twofold victory gain.

• • • • • • • • • •
• • • • • • • • • •

The blessed flowers that twine about thy feet
Look upward fond and shy,
And mutely pulling at thy skirts entreat.
Wilt thou their suit deny,
And leave them crushed and slain ?
They know thy footstep faltered in retreat !
They marked a gathering sigh !
Not any more need word of mine entreat ;
Thou wilt no more deny ;
I have not loved in vain !

ROBERT BROWNING.

OUT of the heart of the night
 Into the brave daylight,

 Stepped a man,
For God sent him.
Who shall let or prevent him ?

 Whom God sends who can ?

Out of the doubts of the past,
 Into the right at last,

 Pushed a soul
That God fashioned.
Mightily truth impassioned
 And strove for the goal.

Out of the pitiful dream,
 That things are what they seem

 Rose a heart
At God's shaking ;
Stood as one newly awaking,
 And saw, though in part.

Out of the ranks of a crew,
Into the roll of the few,
 Passed a mind
God promoted ;
 And we marvelled and noted
 A king of his kind.

Out of the slothful 'Who cares ?'
Into the noble 'Who dares ?'
 Pressed a will,
Strong, unbending,
With its bias unending,
 For good or for ill.

Forth from a cage set wide,
Into the blue outside,
 A spirit fled.
Men come and go
As God decrees, and so
 Browning is dead.

A LEGEND OF THE SKY WATCHERS.

(*Harper's Magazine*, Sept. 1889.)

'TWAS God who in the olden time
 Fashioned a great red sun.
'And this,' He said, 'shall be the eye
That daily from the silent sky
 For good and evil done
Shall watch, and up the heavens climb.'

And all obedient to the word,
 Unwinking from his place,
Looked out the watchman at his post,
 And saw the ever-moving host,
 That with or grief or grace
The changing landscape blest or blurred.

But when the daylight fades to eve
Full heavily the wight
Leans his great head upon his hands,
And like a tired sentry stands
And wearies for the sight
Of one who shall his watch relieve.

'Twas God who in the olden time
Fashioned a silver moon.
'And this,' He said, 'shall be the eye
That, when the midnight of the sky
Has overwhelmed the noon,
Shall search the earth for love or crime.'

And all obedient to His word,
But with a pallid fear
Of what the dreadful night would bring,
When every fierce and hidden thing
Might suddenly appear,
The blanching moon looked forth and heard.

And what she saw we do not know,
Or whether 'twas the sight
Of Abel lying stiff and cold,
Half trodden in the trampled mould.
That filled her with affright,
Until she feared her face to show ;

We cannot tell, but even now,
When mortals are asleep,
Across her visage fixed and pale
She hasteneth to draw a veil,
And only dares to peep,
But fears to bare her marble brow ;

And only when the month has rolled
Right round upon its wheel,
Full cautiously, with anxious dread
She lifts the shadow from her head,
One moment to reveal
Her glory and her face unfold.

The stars, that are her children dear,
And learning to be moons,
Hang out their little lamps to burn,
And quake and tremble in their turn.
Or fall in sudden swoons,
Infected by her grievous fear.

And though to watch the ways of men
Sun, moon, and stars are told,
The sun alone with open stare
Upon the guilty world doth dare
To cast his eye of gold,
And clouds enfold him even then.

Perchance One brooding o'er the land
 Of purpose willed it so,
And hath not been extreme to mark
The crooked ways that in the dark
 His stumbling children go ;
And even Cain shall have his brand ;

And if the moon her secret keep
 He may his brother find,
And kiss away the dreadful blue
That changed his body's goodly hue,
 By sudden stroke unkind
That left him dead among his sheep.

Perchance at lifting of the lid
 Of the resurrection day
Sweet Abel, with his brother's hand
Fast locked in his, shall meekly stand
 And for that other pray,
'Behold, he knew not what he did ;'

And for the brightness of that blood
 That covers every stain,
The brothers two, in fields afar
United, may forget they are
 The slayer and the slain,
And emulate each other's good.

THE DAY OF LOVE IS PAST.

THE day of love is past—the day of love.
O day of love, so sweet ! O heart, poor heart !
You leaned your weight upon a wounding thorn
You leaned your love upon a human soul.
O day of love, and art thou past indeed ?
Gone ! gone ! I know thee gone, I know myself
Alone in God's full world. Have pity, God
Have pity ! pity !

THE INCENDIARY.

PULL down the stars ;

Here let us have a game
Of patent pattern ;
You bowl with Mars,

And I will take an aim
With belted Saturn.

Come, lend a hand ;

The bright thing there is wasting,
Not serving Hodges ;

We'll make a stand,

And give the star a basting :
Till it dislodg s.

We'll sink the scale

And light the rich man's winders :
I've tar and matches.

When we turn tail,

And all the house in cinders,
Hindmost he catches.

THE INCENDIARY

How now, you dolts ?
Why tremble in your boots,
 My sucking Platos,
 At thunder-bolts,
Or little star that shoots,
 Or—hot potatoes ?

We have no fear ;
And if you talk of reverence,
 And all that twaddle,
 We love our beer,
And hope to see no severance
 'Twixt screw and paddle.

Who cares for caste
In these new days of level ?
 We didn't make it.
 As for the past,
It may go to the devil
 An' he will take it.

Hold !—there is God !
I almost had forgotten
 The Book—His letter—
 But paths are trod,
And the old ways get rotten
 And we want better ;

And, as I say,
The old road is too straight,
We'd have it wider.
There's room to pray,
But to be mad and hate,
Or drunk on cider,

There's hardly space,
Or so our mother taught us
When she lay dying.
I see her face,
And how her look besought us
For some replying.

My mother!—yes!
All right, my lads, I'll come:
You needn't doubt it;
But I confess
Just now I'm flummoxed some;
I'll—think about it.

NIGHT.

I HAVE touched the hem of another night,
 And the awful darkness grows and crawls
 Round the curtains and up the walls,
And all the comfort of the light
Has gone with the sun, for the moon is white
 And ashen cold. There is death in the moon
 And a livid fear, like a face in a swoon.
Can I forget the dread that wrought
In my startled mind, and the awful thought
 That came in the day,
 And surged and lay
Heavy as waters that suck and pull
At a drowning man, till his eyes are full
 Of salter tears than he ever shed ?
Can I forget that mortal dread
Here where I climb up into my bed,

And hug my body, and rock and groan ?
For even my body is not my own ;
But I think of the weight of an ugly stone
 That shall heavily crush and press me down
 ' Into the earth so damp and brown ;
And I feel the stamp of a heavy boot,
For the sexton has dared to set his foot
 On my face, that men called sweet and fair ;
 And terribly neat is my braided hair,
For a stranger lady's maid had its doing :
Not for a wedding or a wooing,
 But for a long night's lie-a-bed
 She arranged my gown and coifed my head.

Ah ! how I sicken while I write !
It is heavy truth, though the words are light,
 And I fear, I fear the coming grave ;
 Brave men fear, and I am not brave.
Know you the look of a face death-stricken ?
Ah ! while I write I pause and sicken.
 Know you the death stare of the eyes,
 Wide with a terrible surprise,
And the fearful silence the dumb lip keeps
When the fluttering breath comes forth in leaps ?
 Did they spare to tell us the truth,
 For pity of us and unselfish ruth,

When, mutely turning from us aside,
They gave no signal but meekly died?

I am weary, weary: my pencil falls
From my slack hand, and on the walls
The flickering candle's fitful spark
Scarce holds its own against the dark,
But falters and suddenly waxes dim
As the taper burns to my candle rim.

DAY.

THE fear of the night has passed away :
I am strong with the light of another day,
And instead of the ghastly moon I find
A great red sun that is warm and kind.
Is the day God, and life, and good,
And do we taste in the desolate night
The sorrow of souls that out of His sight
Mourn in eternal orphanhood ?

Here where I sit in grateful shade
The bare-limbed beech trees stand and wade
In a pleasant sea of washing air,
Till their leaves are tossed like the tumbled hair
Of laughing girls who dance and leap,
Stepping fearlessly bosom-deep
Into the ocean broad and fair ;
And all about me the children play
Their own sweet games in their own sweet way,
Or stop to kiss with a sudden joy,
Pigmy lovers—a girl and boy.

THE ROUT OF THE ROOKS.

(*Longman's Magazine*, Sept. 1889.)

C AW ! caw ! caw !
Heavy and dark the rook and the daw
Lodge on the trees and shake the branches,
Or sweep to the earth, black avalanches ;
Flooding the new-sown fields,
Wasting the harvest-yields ;
Here with a bullying beak
To dig and scatter and seek ;
To worry and tear the earth
With reckless chattering mirth,
Killing the child-wheat at its birth.
Caw ! caw ! caw !
Careless of mortal law.
What is a trespass board to a crow,
Or a troop of rooks that all in a row
Are hungry with flying,
And purpose defying

The King and the Queen and the whole bench of
judges,

Counsel and jury with fancies and fudges,
Wigs and blue bags, pen, ink, and smudges ;
Briefs that are big, and briefs that are small,
And briefs that have never been brief at all,
But wordy and fulsome, and drawn out and
windy

Contrived for the object of making a shindy ?

At least that's what I heard them say,
Those wicked birds on a sweet spring day.

Caw ! caw ! caw !

Swinging up and down in a mad seesaw,
Socialist birds who ignore the bâton
And laugh at the man with a constable's hat on.

Dark intriguers,
Bold land-leaguers ;
Jail-birds surely, though not in jail ;
Ticket of leave, or out on bail ?
Whatever they are I only know
There never was seen such a noisy row
Of hot-headed reprobates, bent on obtaining
By hook or by crook, or (by way of explaining)
By beak or by claw, what was haply remaining
To poor farmer Johnson of all his hard labour,
A good man enough and a generous neighbour.

Caw ! caw ! caw !

Down they came, and the farmer saw :

‘Run, Ellen, run,

And take my gun.

You can run swiftly, my little daughter ;

You can aim truly, and neatly slaughter

These greedy foes, who deserve no quarter.’

• • • • •

All through the fields of sprouting rye
In a flash of light the maid passed by,
And into the midst of the dusky crew,
Like a glittering pearl of morning dew,
Dropped on their columns, black as night,
With her shining hair and her kirtle white,
And stood among them, and looked, and sighed,
Then dropped the gun to the earth and cried,
‘Dear black robbers of rye and oats,
With your silky heads and your glossy coats,
Dear black robbers of oats and rye,
I always liked Robin Hood on the sly,
And would take his part if I dared be true,
For I think he was handsome and bold, like you.
Have no fear of me or my gun,
For I love you well as I watch the sun
Kissing your necks with a sheeny light,
Till your feathers are purple and smooth and bright.

Afar I thought you as black as ink,
But a rook is beautiful near, I think.'
Caw! caw! caw!
What of the ravenous beak and craw?
What of the pecking and picking and prigging,
The delving and diving, the drilling and digging?
Suddenly from the field uprose
That hungry army of rooks and crows ;
Suddenly did the sunlight fade
From the golden hair of the little maid,
For over the face of the morning sky
They spread like a funeral canopy ;
Spread, and moved, and sailed away
As the night that is leaving the new-come day.

But the farmer's daughter, who watched the while
Smiling a little wistful smile,
Said, ' Dear robbers, I loved you so ;
You were good to come, but better to go
I may not say it, but still I think
It is bad for birds to want food or drink ;
And when I go to the church to pray,
" Give us Thy bounty day by day,"
I shall whisper low while the prayer is said,
" And give to the rooks their daily bread." '

A SEQUENCE.

BLUE, blue, all is blue !

The flower that you wear,

And the sky above,

And your eyes, my love,

And the veins that cross the sweet hands of you.

Oh, my life ! oh, my dear !

All is blue.

White, white, all is white !

The pearls in your hair,

And the bridal lace,

And your sweet young face,

And the blossoms that crown your forehead's height.

Oh, my love ! oh, my fair !

All is white.

Black, black, all is black !

The night (for you died),

And the gloom over all,

And the funeral pall,

And the sorrows that keep my soul in rack.

Oh, my heart ! oh, my bride !

All is black.

Green, green, all is green !

The tender young life,

That borrowed your breath,

And lived by your death,

And the grave where the alders stoop and lean.

Oh, my lost ! oh, my wife !

All is green.

Grey, grey, all is grey !

The sun over-head

No colour will throw

To the earth below,

And I know not the darkness from the day.

Oh, my loved ! oh, my dead !

All is grey.

Gold, gold, all is gold !

I pass to my rest

Through a sun-pierced rift,

Where the shadows lift,

And I come to your heart as in days of old.

Oh, my own ! oh, my best !

All is gold.

WHAT IS LOVE?

'ANSWER me : What is love?' I looked around
 On all the joyful revellers, and found
 One common language, eyes that challenged eyes
 To that sweet mortal conflict where who dies
 Doth straight uplift again ; palm meeting palm
 In feverish impatience of calm,
 For as a badge of brotherhood to such
 Is whispered word or sign, or stolen touch.

'Answer me : What is love?' I see this earth,¹
 This handling of twin tissues that had birth
 In one same Adam-fathered mould, and must
 Eve-mothered turn as surely back to dust.
 I know this heat, that stirs the rushing flood
 Of hurrying corpuscles that men call blood ;
 But this will stop i' the veins, grow cold, and clot,
 And what will love do then, that finds it not?

¹ Earthiness.

‘Answer me : What is love?’ From out the throng
Slow moving, with a visage pale and strong,
Came one had watched his lady from afar
As who should gaze upon the morning star ;
And in his eye there burnt a sacred fire
That lit my own in passing. ‘Such desire
Is of the soul,’ I cried, and from the band
Passed with him through the moonlight hand in
hand.

A HAREBELL.

FLOWER I hold within my hand,
 Blue as God's eternal sky,
On a dainty pattern planned,
 You were never made to die.

There is pleasure in your cup,
 In the very shape of you ;
'Fill me, night drops; fill me up,'
 You are crying to the dew.

All your swaying beauty finds
 Added sweetness, if it could,
When you bow before the winds
 As a gracious lady would.

At the moving of your bell
 Comes the whisper of a sigh :
Only those can hear it well
 Who among the grasses lie ;

For the harebells have a voice,
And the tiny insect band
Know their music and rejoice,
In that quiet underland.

And the booming honey-bee,
All in suit of velvet trim,
Pauses in his flight to see
If you hold a gift for him ;

But he pays you like a lord
For the spoil of precious things,
And the golden pollen hoard
Is the money that he brings.

If he shelter in your cell
From the sudden thunder showers.
Many a story he can tell
Of the loves of other flowers ;

For he gossips with them each,
And he knows the secret tale
Why the pink is on the peach,
But the blossom deadly pale ;

Why the cups have modest eyes,
But the pockets patch and paint ;
Why the lily martyr-wise
Vowed herself a maiden saint.

Ah ! he knows them one and all ;
And, my harebell, too he knows,
In the shadow of the wall,
Where another harebell grows.

He is postman to the field,
And I fancy in his kit
He has brought a letter sealed :
Only you can open it.

Flower I hold within my hand,
Blue as heaven's eternal sky,
All for joy and beauty planned,
Which is blithest, you or I ?

WHAT THE BIRDS SAY.

BIRDS that chirp in the morning,
Sharp and shrill in the early light,
What do they say when the dawning
Has folded away the night?
'Cheep ! cheep ! cheep !' from the gables overhead :
'Give us—give us—give us, give us our daily bread.'

A SERMON AND A LOVE LETTER.

HILARY (*walking in a garden*).

Here comes my sister. Ah ! how light her tread !
How dainty proud the carriage of her head !
Her lips apart,
For ever breathing song, as though her heart
Would break for very joy's sweet pain
Should they refrain.

EILEEN (*sings*).

My garden is full of roses,
And over my garden wall
They hang their clustering petals
In a white and crimson fall.

Nothing is found in my garden
That yieldeth not its due—
Sweets of ravishing perfume,
Tints of delicate hue ;

This for its cup of nectar,
And that for its honied cells,
And the old-world plant in the border
For its chime of purple bells ;

Gold and purple and scarlet,
Colours to deck a queen ;
Every tint of the rainbow,
With a thousand shades between.

Graces and joys and beauty
Grow in my garden beds ;
For the homelier weeds of duty,
I leave them for wiser heads.

HILARY.

Ah, my sweet sister, you have caught the day
New-waking, and have chid her where she lay,
As who would chide a slumbering milking lass
When on the upland grey full-uddered cows
Uplift impatient from the dewy grass,
And lowing stand, with broad, expectant brows.
Thus have you chid the morning with your voice,
Full-throated warbler. Yet I would your rhyme
Had shaped itself to other words—and time.
I love it not, this ditty of your choice.

EILEEN.

A little wanton song that speaks my mind,
How should it grieve you, brother?

HILARY.

In this kind :

That only out of wantonness of thought
A fellow wantonness of words is wrought ;
That lightness makes for lightness ; lip and heart
Do haply sing together, each in part.
It argues poorly for the spirit's creed
If joys are flowers, and duty but a weed.

EILEEN.

I know my fault, dear brother—that I bless
Joy for joy's sake, and love and loveliness,
And all that pleases eye and soul and sense.

HILARY (*aside*).

I would upbraid, but surely innocence
Alone could prompt her tender heart to tell
What guiltier souls would feel and hide so well.

EILEEN.

Life is too short for sorrow : I would fill
The shrunken days full up with pleasure, till

For very overflowing of delight
Day stretched itself to gather in the night ,
And night, not any whit to be outdone,
Raised languid eyelids to the chiding sun,
Then closed again with soft, indulgent sigh,
Her interrupted bliss to satisfy.

HILARY (*sighing heavily*).

Ah, sister, may you never live to find
Sweetness your woe, and kindliness unkind.
Love all things beautiful and good, but pray
God of His mercy teach you which be they.
Too gentle nesting-place doth never mark
Sun-loving eagle, or sky-seeking lark ;
The one from thorns, the other from the sod,
Springs up to light, to heaven, and to God.

EILEEN.

If sweet must turn to bitter, ease to strife,
Then better death than such unlovely life.
My lightness is my own, and if I dare
To have it so why should another care ?

HILARY (*unfolding a letter*).

God hath not made us units, but doth knit
Soul to its fellow soul, as He sees fit.

EILEEN.

It will be time enough, my brother, then
To talk of creeds and commonplace. For men
(So I am told), in seeking for the bliss
Of life companionship, ask firstly this :
'Is she a cook, and will she serve aright
Her lord's best part, a manly appetite ?
What of her needle ? Does the dainty shaft
A weapon prove of wifely handicraft,
Which, deftly wielded with a patient skill,
Subdues the sullen fabric to her will ?'
Why are you frowning, brother ? Must I plead
This nineteenth century, and woman freed
From looms and lace, and threading tapestry,
That cruellest device of all, whereby
She should be kept in due subservience ?
Nay, brother ! and I will not make pretence
To love those modern labours of the brain
By women called 'self-culture,' which, again,
Destroy the joy of living for life's sake,
Of loving for love's sake, and rudely take
The bloom from off the peach, as when a hand
Should brush its velvet, bent to understand
The manufactured texture and to pry
Into great Nature's work with curious eye.

For me—I love the ripe thing where it falls,
A luscious, blushing morsel, from the walls,
As crying, ‘Take me, mellowed over-much
By surfeit of sun’s rays ; yea, taste and touch.
Taste me and learn my juicy virtues well ;
Feed heart and sense with touch and taste and smell.’

HILARY (*slowly refolding the letter*).

I came upon an errand, but I fear,
Young sister, that you are not ripe to hear.

EILEEN.

What have you there? A letter from your friend,
The grave man Hubert? Tell me, does he send
A message of most fatherly reproof
To a poor silly woman? How aloof
He stands in his stern manliness!
I would he’d stoop a little and confess
To just a touch of human frailty.
The heavens are beautiful, but only sky
Hath never made a landscape to my mind ;
I fear I look for earth or sea combined.
But of this letter : What hath he to say?
The same old story—grave instead of gay,
Learning instead of leisure, sober joys
For heaven-made rapture? How the teaching cloys!

HILARY.

If I should tell you that the man you blame
As cold has yielded to the tender flame
Of a first passion, would you think it well
And call it wisdom?

EILEEN (*hurriedly*).

That I cannot tell.

But you are jesting. If you said the moon
Gave out a sudden heat, I should believe
As soon the lunar wonder as conceive
Your friend love-stricken.

HILARY.

Yet the truth is so,
My sister, and a woman's yes or no
Will turn the balance of his happiness.

EILEEN (*turning away*).

I think there is no question, no or yes.
If Hubert loved it would be love indeed.
If Hubert wooed he would not stand to plead,
As other men, content to sue and trim,
The patient victim of a woman's whim,
But tell me of this maid who dares to play
So venturesome a part.

HILARY.

I dare not say,
For even now I met her in the grove,
A woman fair of feature, whom to love
Seemed a religion ; but I looked for grace,
And lo ! a mocking lightness, and the face,
So godly beautiful, I found a mask
Of vanity—

EILEEN (*interrupting him*).

Oh ! brother, if I ask
Her name and where she dwells, and you reply,
'Not Eileen, but another,' how should I
Be glad and call it wisdom ?

HILARY.

Sister mine,
Love be thy teacher, for his heart is thine.

PAIN'S TRIUMPH.

THUS and thus spake Love to Pain :
‘ I am stronger, thou art weaker ;
All seek Love, but the Pain-seeker
You may seek in vain.’

Answer thus made Pain to Love :
‘ If you count my victims duly
Women-seekers have I truly
That your words disprove.’

‘ Silly souls that puke and pule,’
Muttered Love with indignation,
‘ Feeding on their own vexation,
Only prove my rule.’

Yet that other spake again :
‘ Friend, I have advantage double.
Who pursue thee, for their trouble
Seeking Love find Pain.’

THE SEXTON AND THE BRIDE.

SPADE for sexton,
 And wreath for bride ;
 Two in the church,
 And one outside.

‘Whom God joins let no man sunder ;’
 Yet he up atop and she hereunder
 Shall lie,
 Ere a year and a day go by.

Silk and satin
 And bed of down,
 But a crib of straw
 For a country clown.

Let ‘em have it ; the days fly swift,
 And she’ll soon want nothing but shroud and shrift.
 And then
 To be carried by serving men.

Gifts of silver,
And gifts of gold,
And a sight more gems
Than her hands can hold ;
And don't be afraid that the sexton will stint
To draw on the treasures that crowd his mint
For a curse
He will promise to fling at her hearse.

• • • • •

What of sexton?
And what of bride?
Tis a year and a day
Come Eastertide,
And the sexton that lies on a mortal bed
And the lady that holds his sinking head,
For hate
Is forgot at the beautiful gate.

OUT OF MY SKY I LOST A STAR

OUT of my sky I lost a star.

Ah, sweet star with your tender ray,
 The gloom of the night was chased away ;
 Drawn by the magic of your spark,
 Our brother men who had walked in the dark
 Looked up to the heavens and thought it day.

Out of my heart I lost a joy.

Ah, sweet joy from so mean a nest,
 "Tis no wonder you fled to another breast,
 To light the flame on another cheek,
 And prompt the words that I dare not speak,
 When you left me alone with great unrest.

Out of my life I lost a friend.

Ah, my sweet star, sweet joy, sweet friend,
 The Lord He hath taken, for He did send.
 Come what may, I will bless Him still,
 Bless Him alike for the good and the ill ;
 I shall love you again in the world without end.

Amen, Amen, Amen.

DEAD PHARAOH.

Written after reading two articles on the finding of Pharaoh, i
the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* for May 1887.

HE called me dog, and spurned me from the path—
I, scarcely more than infant, sent to learn
The ways and manners of the outer world,
Beyond the kindly shelter of my home :
I, a Jew boy with native prejudice
To be remodelled on an English plan ;
He, big with all the swelling insolence
Of eighteen wasted years. He called me ‘dog’
And ‘skulking Hebrew slave,’ and ‘only wished
He had been Pharaoh, that he might with whips
Have scourged away my Jewish stubbornness ;’
And with the rough print of his cruel hand
Red on my shrinking flesh (albeit a Jew,
My flesh would shrink and redden) I lay still
Where he had flung me, lay and would not move,
Face downward in the gutter, and my teeth

Closed on the soaking ooze, and scarcely knew
To mutter smothered curses, choked and thick.
Yet I did mutter them, and rose at length
To wipe the horrid moisture from my lips.

I think I never was a child again
Thereafter, for the vulgar, wanton wrong
So scorched and seared my spirit's tenderness
That all a man's wrath battled in my heart,
And all a man's pride rose to manage it ;
And in that I had suffered at the hand
Of that young modern Pharaoh, English-born,
I seemed to taste again the bitterness
That grieved our fathers in the ancient time,
And to those early days of tyranny
My forming mind turned ever in its smart,
And this and that seemed one for cruelty.
And pride and wrath together did rear up,
Brick after brick—for so my softer clay
Would harden ever in the fiery kiln—
Did rear, I say, a sullen monument,
Broad-based and steadfast as the pyramid
That Cheops builded, and that Moses knew
When all the land was trampled with the foot
Of that old Pharaoh, second Rameses—
A great eternal monument of wrong

That must not be forgotten, thus inscribed :

‘Here lies Oppression, ready for the day
Of final judgment. Here the Assyrian¹ waits
The verdict of the Hebrew by-and-by.’

Would God I were that Hebrew ! would to God
That I might stand and beard him to his face,
That ‘new king over Egypt,’ that base lord
Who ‘knew not Joseph’ ! Thus I made my cry,
And still waxed fiercer, muttering, ‘Would that I
Might see him struggle from his sere grave-clothes
In that most awful morning of the world
When wicked sleepers waken to their doom.’
Ah ! how he’d start at hearing of his name !
‘Get up, old Pharaoh ! it is time to rise !
How have you slept, old Pharaoh, darkly hid
In black recesses of the silent rock ?’

I see him turn upon me suddenly,
With all the hateful tyranny of old.

‘Back, Hebrew slave ! Ho ! careless taskmasters,
That leave an idle Israelite at large !
Here with your rods, and see that he fulfil
His work as heretofore, when there was straw.’

¹ The Pharaohs are supposed by some to have been of Assyrian origin.

I think I would, or very villany
Of deep revenge, cringe to him for awhile,
Crying, 'Be pitiful, great Pharaoh, god,
Whose name on fruits of the great Tree of Life
Those deities inscribe, Amen-Ra-Tum,¹
Supreme in godly power, and great Tahut,
In knowledges and science the supreme,
And Safekh, goddess of all writing called.
Be pitiful, great king, and spare a slave
Whose only title to be called a man
Is that he sells for so much more than kine.'

Thus would I sue and cringe and fawn awhile,
Then straight uplift, and face him eye to eye,
In quiet strength of scorn—yes, I and he,
Eyes meeting, king and slave, a Pharaoh there
And here an Israelite, and bid him come
And follow me to judgment—he the king,
The tyrant, bid him come and follow me,
The beaten Hebrew slave. I would not spare
In that my day of vengeance, not for all
The tears and prayers and cryings, rather make

¹ 'The walls of the Ramesseum preserve a bas-relief depicting the apotheosis of this exalted sceptre-bearer' (Rameses II.). See article in *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, May 1887.

His pitiful entreaties feed my flame,
My burning flame of righteous recompense.
It would be pretty sport to see the king
Eat dust before his menials—ay, and feel
The bitter strokes he laid so plentiful
On tired shoulders straining to their load.

Thus thought I, and thus spake, until my soul
Lost all it knew of mercy, that sweet grace
Which finds a common brotherhood in men ;
And ever with my spirit's fierceness came
A growing sullenness of eye and brow,
And, darkly patterned on my countenance,
The hidden thought would trace itself in lines.
And so I passed from youth and never knew
The blessedness and gentleness of youth.

Men looked askance, then shunned me, whispering,
'The fellow hath a humour of the mind
Best unprovoked,' while I, unheeding them
And careless to explain my spirit's mood,
Walked on alone, unmated and unloved ;
And still one prayer was ever on my lips,
That had been prayerless else, one muttered cry
For 'vengeance upon Pharaoh.'

So it came

That on a certain morning of the year,
That seemed to chide my temper with its light,
When all the air was jubilant with birds,
And crimson poppies lolled their wind-blown heads
In royal apathy above the grass—
On such a day the strong, full-blazing sun
Looked down upon a flame that did not pale
Before the searching ardour of his gaze,
For in my bosom the long-smouldering heat
Burst sudden into fiery utterance.

‘This day,’ I cried, ‘must see a Pharaoh fall.
Be steady, hand ; knife, pitiless and keen.
Spare not for age who spared not tender youth ;
A tyrant’s blood shall stain the earth to-day.’

Perhaps it was a madness of the brain ;
If rightly called I know not, but I fled,
Hate-tortured, through the streets, with wandering
eye

And fearful covert glances, mouthing still
‘A Pharaoh ! Pharaoh ! tell me where he dwells,
That I may visit him.’

Then one who passed,

And hearkened wondering, came hasting back,
And touched me lightly, crying, ‘ He is found :

Pharaoh is found. If you would see his face
Take ship for Cairo ; there behold the king,
Face open to the light of modern day.'
And while I knew not for astonishment
If now indeed I dreamed, or if perchance
That other sported with me, yet again
Spake out the stranger boldly, 'In the rocks
Of Deir-el-Bahari they found the king,
Great Pharaoh – the oppressor.'

Then my heart
Leapt in my bosom with a sudden throb
Of pleasure, fiercer than the panther knows
When through the wood steals his unwary prey :
For now I knew that I should see the man,
And curse him to his face, and call on God
To multiply His vengeance sevenfold.

What lay between this and my journey's end
I cannot tell, for straight upon the word
I hasted seaward and took ship for Thebes ;
And like a shell that on a broken wave
Is washed and hurled and tumbled in the foam,
But earthward flung at length, so did our bark,
Wind-harried, tempest-beaten, take the shore
In far-off Egypt, and I stood and knew
A common country held my foe and me.

Then came a day (I almost wonder now
I lived to see it, for so hotly burned
The vengeful passion, fuelled by my hate),
A day when with my hand upon a door
In thirsty Bûlâk, and my heart tied down
To save its bursting, I stood still to frame
The fierce anathema ; for there beyond,
With only this thin wood to sever us,
I knew he lay, the mummied Rameses.

Said one who watched me, ' Enter ; have no fear :
He will not turn upon thee for a Jew ! '

But I, the careless words had stung my heart
To nicer frenzy, suddenly outreached
My straining arms, and held him in a vice
Of rigid sinews, and jerked close my beard
Into his startled face, and ' Look you, man,'
I muttered, hissing, ' look you, tis the day
Of vengeance upon Pharaoh. Tis the day
When righteous God shall judge twixt man and man.'
Then from my grasp I put him slowly back
As one who does, yet knows not that he does,
And felt the door, and groped with staring eyes,
That saw not clear for fury, and passed in
To curse the haughty monarch to his face.

Ah ! now I'd meet him, not on craven knee,

With creeping flesh, to glad his wanton eye
 With lust of tyranny, but thus and thus.
 I clenched my iron hand till all the palm
 Was marked with bloody crescents, and my eyes
 Burnt in their sockets, like the living coal
 A touch would stir to flaming ; then strode in,
 A Jew, to face him.

Who ?

This poor old man ?

This pitiful, most pitiful old man,
 With hollowed cheek, and meekly fallen jaw,
 And dead blind eyes, that from their shrunken lids
 Looked out, but saw me not ?

I could have wept

To know myself defeated.

What was this,

That I should curse it ?

A mere clod of earth,
 This blackened, shrivelled remnant of a man !

As Balak summoned Balaam to his need . . .
 With 'Curse me these,' but he, ' How can I curse
 When God wills not ? ' so with my lips as dumb,
 Not willingly, but of necessity,
 I stood amazed, while all the surging wrath
 That foamed about my lips, broke, backward drawn

By sudden ebb. And even while I looked,
Lo ! all the pity of it to my heart
Stole softly in, and robbed my eyes of hate,
And touched my hand to foreign gentleness.
The pity of it ! Thus to see a king !
For still he looked a king, for all his rags
And horrid charnel wrappings, lying thus,
Outbeggaring the worst.

I never knew
The blessedness of tears that wash the soul
Of brutish evils, but a sudden storm
Shook all my frame with passionate remorse ;
And then I spake, with hand uplifted high,
And eyes that met the pitiful dead eyes
With equal meekness. How the prayer was made
I know not clearly. For the words I used
It matters less. God knows, I cursed him not.

WEEP AND SING.

WEEP and sing,
Toll and ring,
Bells and voices together;
Sun and rain,
Pleasure and pain,
Summer and winter weather.

White and red,
Living and dead,
A wreath for my lady's marriage;
Corpse and bride,
Side by side,
And a plume for a funeral carriage.

KNOWLEDGE ONLY TASTED.

TO know and not to know, to stand apart
 Self-centred in the Awful Universe,
 Myself the core of all things and my heart
 The one converging point—this is the curse.
 Oh, most ungentle teaching of our nurse
 To half-arouse, yet leave us in a trance !
 Oh, most unkindly done to thus disburse
 Half-knowledge, which is conscious ignorance,
 And with pretended aid to simulate advance.

Light-handed mother, who with careless glee
 Didst pull the fruit which was to be our harm,
 And plucked it with a smile, and laughed to see
 The red juice trickle on thy dainty arm.
 Was never woe hid in so subtle charm,
 Or sword enveloped in so fair a sheath
 Ne'er blanched thy astonished lips, but, soft and
 warm,
 Did lend their loveliness to feed on death,
 Nor ever shorter came thy constant regular breath.

And yet of old, when God in Paradise
Did build the pleasant trees in sheltering wood
(Some ministered to grace and pleased the eyes,
For usance some and rare ambrosial food),
In very midst the tree of knowledge stood
With heavy-fruited splendour dominant.

‘Behold,’ He said, ‘my trees are very good,
And this of all in place most prominent
Shall stand, with that great tree of life pre-eminent.’

Now I could weep for you, my brother men
Who with shrill voices tear th’ unanswering sky
With rocket questionings, which yet again
Fall earthward hissing, and give back your cry
In silly coloured sparks to cheat the eye ;
And they, while still you wonder at their grace
And deem them constant stars, do straight let fly
The sudden hurtling rod, which hurled apace
Anon strikes cruel blindness on your upturned face.

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OUT OF THE TOWN AT LAST.

FIVE foot four of sweet brown earth,
 To bed me and cover me ;
 Dear green grass, with flowers in birth
 Spreading all over me.

Is it snug to lie adown
 Neath mosses and daisies ?
 If they bury me out of town,
 To Heaven be the praises.

I shall know the cool o' the sod
 On my forehead burning ;
 And crumble away, to the earth and God
 Myself returning.

Out of my dust will grow a bloom,
 Blood-red and flaming,
 For all it was nurtured in a tomb,
 The poppies shaming.

LOVE'S MEASURE.

LOOK up the sky, there where the rifted cloud
 Lets through a deeper blue than gentians know ;
A space that presently the stars will crowd
 With clustered brilliants, playing with the glow
Of hidden fires, too far for mortal ken.

Look up the sky, and past the place of stars,
And out into the dismal night, and then
 On, on until the ruddy globe of Mars
Is left so far behind it cannot warm
 The empty desolation, and still on
Into the silent deep, unmoved of storm ;
 And while your climbing vision stays to con-
The utmost height of heights, behold and say,
‘I reached the *threshold* of our love to-day.’

SONG.

POPPIES RED.

OPENED the morning with drops of dew,
Clear in the evening the stars shone through .
Out in the fields, when the corn was high,
Worked we together, my John and I.
Poppies red and a field of gold,
That's where the tale of our love was told.

He to the binding, and I to glean ;
Never was merrier work, I ween.
How he laughed as the stalks fell round !
How I blushed as they strewed the ground !
Poppies red and a field of gold,
That's where the tale of our love was told.

Straight and strong as a forest tree,
Firm and good as a man should be,
Tender truth in his blue eyes shone :
Is it a wonder that I loved John ?
Poppies red and a field of gold,
That's where the tale of our love was told.

A SUMMER SONNET.

So heavy sweet the tired, scented breeze,
That hardly moves for languor of delight,
That hardly stirs the hawthorns red and white,
The flowery burden of full-freighted trees ;
Sweet honey-cargo of rich merchant bees,
That ply their busy trade from morn till night,
While drowsy birds are faltering in flight
And slowly drop to cover for their ease.

O fulness of the early summer bliss,
A blessed wealth of love-embodied thought,
Forbid that I should greet thee with the kiss
Of smiling Judas, comprehending nought,
With sense-bound eyes, that still behold and miss
The inner mystery, divinely wrought.

A SNOW SONNET.

(*Harper's Magazine*, April 1889.)

MY ear can find no rest ; the throbbing tide
 Of city commerce is at midday flow :
 Like pulse's beat the footsteps come and go ;
 Harsh rattles thrash the tremulous air aside,
 And tumbling sounds like hoary breakers ride.

‘Who chid primeval waters, can He so
 Bind this wild flood with His great “Hitherto”?’
 So moaned I, fever-stricken, and so cried.

My ear awake, and yet can find no sound ;
 Another midday, and no midday rush,
 But blessed silence, deep, unbroke, profound,
 While feathered flakes my window lightly brush.
 God came into His nursery, and found
 The children noisy, so He whispered, ‘Hush.

HEART'S BITTERNESS.

IF you could see my heart,
I think you would
Be very gentle on your part,
And good.

If you could plumb my pain,
I think your brow
Would never knit in wrath again,
As now.

If you could lift the veil,
And know the truth,
I think your very lips would pale
For ruth.

If you could draw anear,
To read my mind,
I think you must for very fear
Grow kind.

If you could take my love !

Ah ! I rebel !

No more—What comes from God above

Is well.

A SONG OF TEARS.

“‘We bait our hook with a dead child,’ said an agent of an insurance company.’—See *Contemporary Review*, July 1890.

HOW can I turn my rhyme most mournfully?
 Throw it out like a cry,
Breathe it up with a sigh,
So that not one shall listen scornfully?

Not as a verse-repeater
In one set metre,
With the sing-song of the children,
Who sway to and fro
In a neat row—
The small white-aproned children of the village
 school,
All in rule.
Not so will I shape my song,
But with a line here drawn out doleful and long,

Quavering, shaking the air,
With the last despair
Of an infant crying alone in a garret bare.
Even so will I wail
Out my sorrowful tale ;
Even so turn my ditty
Till the dews of an infinite pity
Stand in your eye,
While you catch the cry
Of the child victims of drink in the city.

There are quick gasps
While the baby grasps
The tumbled rags in its tiny hand,
Feeling blindly
For comfort kindly,
With a vain demand.
For its throat is dry
For lack of the sweet supply,
And the tear where it falls must lie,
When no help is nigh.
Courage, baby ! soon you will die
And fly
To the sky,
Where the soft angel-mothers will sing you
a lullaby.

You shall be pressed,
As in a nest,
To a warm breast,
Where they hunger no more,
Neither thirst any more,
For the babies are blest.

Ay, then——but now——

Stop short my verse,
Sound thick
Each broken word,
Half spoken and but half heard,
Sobbing,
Throbbing,
While the sweet breath comes quick.
Care not a jot
Whether or not
This line with this,
By counted beat,
Or regular feet,
Reckons amiss.
It would drown
The up and down
Of the baby's breathing,
So uncertain,
Behind the torn curtain ;

For the poor wee thing
Hears the step of its mother,
And knows it from any other.
One—two—three,
Up the creaky stair cometh she.
Four, five, six, seven——
Quicker, mother, for the love of Heaven !
Eight——
Why does she wait
So long there
On the broken stair ?
Nine—ten—eleven.
How uneven
Is her heavy treading !
Twelve—thirteen,
The passage threading,
Uncertain.
Come at length,
And the babe makes known
With a gathered strength,
Its wants in a querulous moan.

She heeds not,
Poor sot,
As she lies where she fell,
While all hell

Is aflame on her face
To erase
Beauty of woman and all trace
Of heaven's sweetest grace.
She knows not,
And there she will lie,
While the pitiless night goes by,
Dragging its heavy chain
Of hours that go and come,
Counting the laggard sum
By an infant's hunger-pain,
While every breath is a doubt
Beating the seconds out
From the dry lips apart ;
And the iron tongue of the hour,
In its hard metallic power,
Strikes on an infant's heart.
And an infant's heart is riven
With anguish keen ;
But 'our Father which art in heaven
Hath seen.

Courage, baby ! though now
There is strange dew on your brow,
And a mist that deepens the hue
Of your sweet eyes' early blue.

Courage ! poor little soul,
Heir apparent of ruth,
Prince of the Castle of Dole
In the land of Dalmanuth.¹
Princes are born to fight ;
Thus you enter the list,
Closing your hand so tight,
Clenching your tiny fist.

Aye—but surely was never
Fight so unequal !
And to your bravest endeavour
Remains but one sequel,
Only one possible issue
For all your trying.
What indeed can we wish you
Better than dying ?

Now it has come ! a slight stirring
Moves the thin cover,
Sighs that are longer recurring,
And then—all is over.
"I'was well done, little soldier :
You fought with a will.
The battle is ended ; unfold your
Hand, and lie still.

¹ The Persic for Dalmanutha, meaning exhaustion, leanness.

Alas ! my poor impotent verse,
Have you wept with me ? Have you done worse ?
Have you smiled
At the wild
Unheeding passion
That led the rhyme in its own fashion ?
For all night in my sleeping,
With woful faces,
Come the sad children creeping
Out of their places ;
And my ear weaves
The sound of the pattering
Of their soft feet
With the thin beat
Of the rain-drops scattering
Dry autumn leaves,
And my ear mingles
The wail of their sorrowing
With the drawn sigh
Of a wave gone by,
That is evermore borrowing
A voice from the shingles.

.

And for the rest I beseech you,
Merciful Nation,

By the great Heart of God,
And His awful iron rod,
Let their cry reach you,
And the High Wisdom teach you
Wise legislation.

TO EVELYN R. GARRATT, ON HER
BIRTHDAY.

IT is a time of birds ; from every spray
 Soft voicings chide the silence of the grove.
This to the other tunes of Hope and Love,
And Love and Hope is still th' alternate lay
In chaunted grace of sweet antiphony ;
 While all the air is nicely interwove
With mellow-fluted sounds, as doth behove
Should be the warp and woof of such a day.

For as on such a day (so legends tell)
 God, looking from the tenderness of blue,
Let drop a thought of love, which where it fell
 Took sweetest shape, and rooted there, and grew.
Lo, now my heart doth read the meaning well,
 That thought of God I recognise in you.

SOUL DISCIPLINE.

AS some poor bird, brushed ragged by the gale,
 Drops from the airy tumult of the hills,
 And with nice labour readjusts her quills,
 Blown painful, where rough hurricanes assail ;
 So now my passion-hurried soul, as frail,
 The quicker beating of her bosom stills,
 And her meek task in duteous wise fulfils,
 Low hid in leafy temples of the vale.

O soul and bird, thus ever must it be ?
 Shall vernal equinox no signal bring
 For glorious venture on outreaching wing
 Or daring joy of sky-blown ecstasy ?
 Go, eager fools, taught wisdom by your pain ;
 Learn *how* to fly, then you shall mount again.

A SECRET.

UNTO my love I came with tears and cried,
‘O love, there is a secret chamber hid
Within our dwelling ;’ but she only chid
My sad misgivings, putting them aside
Time after time ; and whether pain or pride
Most urged her keep the counsel that had rid
My soul of peace, I know not : God forbid
That I should doubt, or she be further tried !

Unto my love I came with tears and wailed,
‘O love, I cannot enter at the door
Of your dear heart, that hitherto hath been
My resting-place, but firmly barred and nailed
I find its portal,’ and for evermore
I stand outside the palace of my queen.

PRESENTIMENT.

I HEARD a bell toll on a summer's day,
When all the air deliciously was stirred
With whirring wings, and throbbing note of bird
And every flitting thing was painted gay,
For wingèd motes were keeping holiday.
This hummed, another chirruped, and a third
Made wiry insect music ; but I heard,
Above them all, that bell that tolled alway.

Give me your hand, dear love, and let me know
That I am near you ; let me feel the spell
Of your sweet presence. Once before you go
Your heart upon my heart shall lean and dwell :
And let us love in silence—Even so,
For still I hear the tolling of the bell.

HARVEST SONG.

THE shadows lean across the lands,
And paint the fields a deeper blue ;
With spreading hands the chestnut stands
And falling lights are sifted through.

And all the uplands move and swim,
As full of corn as they can hold,
And to the rim the meadows brim
With precious floods of waving gold.

Now let our hearts the harvest meet,
Nor show a mean disparity,
But ever greet the summer sweet
With larger soul for charity.

GATE OF DEATH.

HOW shall I part from thee, my dear,
 When death hath said to thee and me,
 'Take hands once more,
 Outside the door,
 Then one must pass, and one shall be
 A solitary wanderer here'?

How shall I take thy hand in mine,
 And to my bursting heart allow
 That gentle touch,
 Loved over-much,
 Shall never tell again, as now,
 One heart of love is mine and thine?

Or if I take thy hand and know
 The night has come when we must part,
 Thy dying head
 Shall know for bed
 The throbbing pillow of my heart,
 The garden where our lilies grow.

And if for stress of failing breath
The battle rages sharp and long,
 My arms, around
 Thy body wound,
Shall compass thee and keep thee strong,
And nurse thee to the gate of death.

O God, to vindicate that day,
The immortality of love,
 Let one grave hold
 Our human mould,
And from the gentle grass above
Let one stone mark our common clay.

A MARCH HOWL.

(*Longman's Magazine*, March 1889.)

THE weather is rude and rough, with its shade and
stare,

And great wild clouds do saucily flirt their wings
I' the face of the yellow sun, then leave it bare ;
And the boughs are broke on the trees and no bird
sings ;

And the cattle are blown on the hills, and grass is
rare.

There's a wind in the empty house, where the ivy
clings,

And the gnawing mice in the wainscot begin to pair,
And the dust is swept into rings,
And the opening daylight brings
No joy anywhere.

I am soured and old and grey, and the hunger stings.
I have given the dog his meat, and the cat her share ;

I have nibbled my mouldy crust while they fed like kings,

And still they are asking for more, and I've none to spare.

And I've caught the owl in the barn, and cut her wings ;

And if worst must come to the worst, still fare is fare
And we'll try her with pepper and salt, and such like things ;

She'll last us a week with care,
If we pick and pickle and pare,
With no questionings.

I've pawned the last of my goods, and the three-legged chair ;

But the broker's a greedy dog, and he screws and wrings,

And he never was known to settle a business fair.

He's a Jew by the hook in his nose and his bargainings ;

He's a Jew by the cut of his coat and his greasy hair ;
And I'll warrant he'll feather his nest with his ill-got ware,

While the sign of the gold balls swings
And its baneful shadow flings
A curse everywhere.

It's cold in the month of March and the early springs,
When I creep to bed like a ghost up the creaky stair ;
And I'm taken with chill and cramp and the shiver-
ings,
And the rats leap off to their holes with a sudden
scare,
When I shake the floor with the cough and the quiver-
ings ;
And I lie like a hungry beast in a frosty lair,
And the blanket's of little use, for it's worn to strings.
And I've 'most forgotten my prayer,
But I'll say it to-night, howe'er,
For Heaven's favourings.

There's 'Matthew and Mark and Luke and John ;'
With the best of prayers I rank it ;
But there's never a 'bed that I lie on,'
And if ever an angel had brought me one
I'd down on my knees and thank it.
So I stretch on the stone, with a sigh and a groan,
And a 'Providence bless my blanket !'

SONG.

THE heavens that lay so blue by day
Are deep as deep can be ;
Though all bedight with clustered light,
There is one star for me.

The fields that hold their store of gold
Are waving like the sea ;
In shaded walk the lovers talk :
There is one path for me.

The hearts that beat for rapture sweet,
Or break at fate's decree,
Are tuning still to good or ill :
There is one heart for me.

O star above, I call thee Love !
O path, what name I thee ?
The path of pain I tread to gain
The one sweet heart for me.

THE POPPY KING.

CROWNED is the poppy-head
With a thatch of scolloped green
Where the flaunting flower has been,
And the purple stamen-thread
Its wealth of pollen shed,
Behind the crimson screen,
In a chamber all unseen.

Crowned is the poppy-head,
Though it wear no silken vest,
Like the gown of a bridal guest ;
Though the blossom's blown and dead,
And its glorious beauty fled,
Yet the globings of its crest
To the forming fruit attest.

Crowned is the poppy-head,
King of the flowery land ;
It is swaying tall and grand,

Like a monarch born and bred
To the right of the royal red,
And below it, smooth and bland,
The nodding courtiers stand.

I looked on the poppy-head,
With its glory crown of ten,
Till I thought of an opium den,
And my heart grew heavy as lead.
'King of the flowers,' I said,
'Shall you be a king of men?'
And I broke the poppy then.

SONG.

IN VAIN.

‘TAKE my hand, and forgive the pain.’

She had been scornful, and I, in pride,
Sullenly put her hand aside :
‘Never again—no, never, never again.’

I came to my love. Was it all in vain ?

I took her hand, in a silent room,
All in the stillness and the gloom.
She will clasp my hand, no, never, never again.

ISADORE.

WHERE the scarlet poppy-heads,
Glowed among the grain
Walked the Lady Isadore,
With her maiden train—

Very fair to look upon,
Very lithe of limb,
With a bonny girdle-chain
Round her body slim :

All in suppleness of gold,
Still it coiled and wreathed,
Moving ever serpent-like
When the lady breathed ;

For a patterned beauty shone
Where the gleaming clasp
Showed, in cunning workmanship,
Jewelled head of asp.

Oh, the Lady Isadore
And her heartless wiles !
And the dreadful loveliness
Of her mocking smiles !

Came the knight Sir Veritas
Through the corn at eve :
' By my right of cousinship,
And by your lady's leave,
' I will walk with you,' he said,
' And your maidens three.'
Laughed the Lady Isadore,
' It matters not to me.'

Rose the colour to his brow,
Red as any flame ;
Gleamed the lightning in his eye :
Was it pride or shame ?

Fled the colour from his face,
Blanched his brow above.
Steely cold his countenance :
Was it hate or love ?

But he met her in her mood :
Doffed his bonnet low :
' If it matter not,' he said,
' Should I come or go,

'I will please myself awhile
With your maidens three;
If their lady go or stay
Matters not to me.'

Oh, the Lady Isadore !
But her heart was stone !
He, of all the suitor band,
Was her chosen one !

In the mellow harvest time,
When the poppy grieves,
And like weary labourers
Lean the tired sheaves,

When the careful husbandman,
Watching cloudy signs,
Saw a quiet sky above,
Ruled with quiet lines,

Came the Lady Isadore,
Passing yet again
Where a fallen poppy flower
Left a crimson stain

Not in scornful ladyhood,
Not for wilful hurt ;
With no bonny girdle-chain
Was her body girt.

Circled with the bitterness
Of a spirit sore,
And the jewelled sorrow-drops
Were the gems she wore.

She may walk till eventide,
She may weep till morn,
But no lover knight is seen
Striding through the corn.

She may rue the frowardness
Of her cold disdain,
But the knight, Sir Veritas,
Cometh not again.

Oh, the Lady Isadore
Hath forgone her wiles,
And the cruel blandishment
Of her mocking smiles

In the mellow harvest-time,
Lo ! she hath forgot,
If her lover go or stay
That 'it matters not.'

AN ANSWER TO ALFRED AUSTIN'S
SONNET ENTITLED 'LOVE'S WISDOM.'

'KISS we and part,' he said : 'the limit found
 Of all love's possible ; beyond this line
 Our ling'ring eyes shall follow love's decline.
 Here is the marge,' he said: 'who reach this bound
 Do hear with awful joy the rising sound
 Of swelling ocean, when the pulse divine
 Sweeps upward to the soul. O heart of mine !
 Kiss we and part,' he said, 'lest love be drowned.'

I gave him back, I gave him back his heart.
 'I think,' I said, 'we need no seal for this.
 We part, but not, as Judas, with a kiss.
 If I could kiss,' I said, 'I could not part ;
 Such wisdom knows not love ; belike thou art
 Too coldly wise to venture wedded bliss !'

A PARABLE.

NOW came there such a tangle of sweet sound
 From out th' adjoining brake, that I would
 fain
 With finger deft unravel so fair skein,
 And trace each silken winding, till I found
 Where this and that in threaded music wound,
 And say, 'Here pipes a bullfinch!' or again,
 'Thus doth a lonely throstle tell the pain
 Of unrequited hope, and love uncrowned.'

So God, attentive from the ordered bliss
 Of heaven's pure harmonies, doth stoop His ear
 To gather earthly voices, nor will miss
 A murmured sound; for, be they far or near,
 Not one of all our human cries, I wis,
 But He, most fatherly, doth bend to hear.

LOVE'S AFTERNOON.

O H, deep and sweet ! this is Love's afternoon.

Now stretch great lights across the heavenly
calms,

With tenderness of soft outreaching palms ;
And fretful earth in long delicious swoon
To that dear bosom will be folded soon.

The heavy air is fraught with subtle balms,
A fragrant evensong, in voiceless psalms
Breathed from the flower-lipped marge of the lagoon.

O heart of mine ! big with supreme desire,
That ever like a cagèd bird dost beat
Bruised breast and bloody plumage on the wire
Of adverse destiny, be still, and greet
Love's afternoon as better than the fire
Of its so fierce unchecked meridian heat.

THE CHALLENGE THAT DISARME'D A
THREAT.

HERE is my naked heart—
Friend, be not afraid—
Naked heart for a naked blade.
Thrust in deep ; I only pray
Draw not back till the steel shall slay
And the yielding ghost depart.

Friend, your hand
Will be nearer my heart this night, I ween.
Than it ever before for love has been,
Will be nearer the seat
Of the wild heart-beat
Than you had planned.

My heart's blood,
O my friend,
Will leap to kiss you where you bend ;
Though you draw back
You shall not lack
A baptism in its flood.

Then from its place
My inner life,
Set free by your dear knife,
Shall touch and feel,
Not the cold stee 
But your face.

SONG.

SCOTCH JOHNNY.

SCOTCH JOHNNY came to the fair
 As proud as proud could be ;
 There was Arminel,
 And Christobel,
 And Meg and Molly and me.
 Ah ! Scotch Johnny,
 I would ye had kept away,
 For a heart may be broke
 At a single stroke,
 But it can't be healed in a day.

Scotch Johnny's tongue was smooth,
 And his voice as soft as silk ;
 It was ' Meggy, my dove '
 And ' Molly, my love,'
 And sugar and honey and milk.

Ah ! Scotch Johnny,
I would ye had kept away,
For a heart may be broke
At a single stroke,
But it can't be healed in a day.

Scotch Johnny, had ye dwelt
At home in a Highland glade,
Ye would never have won,
As ye have—a—done,
The love of a lowland maid.

Ah ! Scotch Johnny,
I would ye had kept away ;
For a heart may be broke
At a single stroke,
But it can't be healed in a day.

THE SPARROW'S DEFENCE.

What little character the Sparrow ever possessed has of late years been so rapidly disappearing that the accusation which several correspondents now bring against him will probably put a finishing touch to the tale of his iniquities. He is destroying the crocus beds.—*Standard*, Thursday, April 7, 1887.

S AID a sparrow to a crocus,
‘You are trying to provoke us
By obtruding on the public an imaginary woe ;
For though *Passer Londinensis*
Has been noted for offences,
We were only *passing Bills* about the crocuses.
you know.’

A DAY DREAM.

DREAM—dream—dream.

You and I, in our hammock bed,
 Sway with the branches overhead ;
 Move and swing in a rhythmic measure,
 Resting long, for the summer leisure
 Hath found us willing to take our ease
 In the lazy time of the lazy trees.
 What is it doing, the heavy elm,

That its tired branches bend and lift
 Like an anchored boat with an idle helm
 On the placid ocean turned adrift ?

Though the chestnut fruit is forming fast,
 Scarcely the languid blossoms fall,
 But, faltering from their place at last,

They are swooning earthward one and all ;
 And I hear a voice from the faded blooms,
 That still for a moment cling and hold,
 It is hard to be hurried to our tombs,
 That the young may take the place of the old ;'

And a swelling chestnut makes reply
Jauntily from the branches' top :
' When the wine is spilt and the bottle's dry,
It is time that the useless vessels drop.'

Dream—dream—dream :
It was only a dream in the changing light
Of the moving shadows left and right,
But I hated the chestnut where it swung
In the silly pride of its glory young,
And I aimed a missile straight and true
At the twig where the boasting berry grew,
And laughed to see it fall and meet
The dear pink blossoms at my feet.

LOVE AND PAIN.

‘A MEN,’ I said to my dream of love,
 Said it solemnly, said it slow.
Is it Amen, and must I know
Never again the thrill and the glow,
And the sudden joy, and the joyful pain ?
Must I know it never again ?
How the pain strove with the love, how it strove
With the pulsing joy, but I would not care,
For ever the love had the largest share ;
But now the pain, alas ! and alas !
That came to my soul, and would not pass.

THE BEE, THE LIZARD, AND THE MAN.

THERE came a bee to suck a bud,
 All on a summer's day ;
 It hovered once,
 It hovered twice,
And then it flew away.

There came a lizard to a wall,
But the lizard did not stay ;
 It ventured once,
 It ventured twice,
And then it crawled away.

There came a man to woo a maid :
She met him blithe and gay ;
 But he kissed her once,
 He kissed her twice,
And then he went away.

For the flower had no honey,
And the wall was not sunny,
And the maid had no money !

Isn't it funny ?

But true.

THE WARRIOR LOVER.

ALL pleasant things and gentle good
I had foresworn ; see, here my mood
Is rough as war and harsh as death.
Fierce pants my heart, the fiery breath
Of battle-lust fulfils my breast.
Before the eagle on my crest :
'The warrior turns a timid dove.
Yet love me woman, for I love ;
And trust me woman, for my heart
Hath still reserved one tender part.

THE SECRET OF THE LILY POOL.

THE lily leaves lay flat and green ;
They made a cover for the pool ;
And all beneath the tender screen
Was deep and dark and cool.

The lily bloom had gathered up
Her petal skirt of bridal silk ;
The blue fly lighted on her cup,
Her cup as white as milk.

And to the pool the trees let down
A drapery of tasselled grace ;
But, where they met the water brown,
They swept a dead man's face.

And every falling seed that lit
Must throw a circle from its place ;
The dimpled waters play with it
About that dead man's face.

A moorhen, darting from her nest,
Made sudden tracks from north to south ;
The moving ripples at his breast
Rose up and touched his mouth.

Beside the pool, where sedges grew
And heavy rush-heads bend and sink,
A fisher-bird of azure blue
Peered downward to the brink,
And, leaning from her reedy bower,
In that clear water-mirror scanned,
She seemed a wingèd lupin flower
Held in the dead man's hand.

And no man knew the deed was done ;
For no man ever passed that way,
And he was seen by only one—
A little child at play ;
For she had wandered through the wood.
And, oh ! she kept the secret well ;
Her infant signs none understood—
She had no words to tell.

Nor paled her cheek for pity then,
But, when she grew to woman's case
She said, 'I know not where or when
I saw a dead man's face.'

The mother turned her head away,
For sudden sorrow fills her eye,
And the maiden knows not to this day
None saw her father die.

And still the lily cups are seen,
And, from the rushes by the shore,
The fisher-birds of blue and green
Hang watching as before.

A PARTING.

YOUR hand, my friend: this is to say 'Good-bye.'

As suddenly we met, so now we part.

With such a rash precipitance did I

To you, a stranger, open my bare heart,

My bare and sacred heart ; and even set

Its careful curtains wide, that you might see.

I loved you then—I love you still—and yet

Good-bye, my friend ; GOD knows what is to be.

LIFE LORE.

FULFILLED with life
Was all the teeming earth ;
Birth followed birth.
Fair souls took sweetest flesh
To learn afresh
The mystery of being, and the strife
Of soul-good and flesh-evil
Mixed, not mingled,
Each one and singled,
As holy God and devil.

With open hand
From out the flowery land
Where bright things blossom in a genial ray,
Soft twilight, but warm day,
Flung out the Master on the waiting broad
Of world's rich bosom all the treasure-hoard
Of seed, ripe taken from the over-yields
Of wealthy heaven's fair fields.

As thoughts in sudden words
Take shape, like birds,
And fly from heart to heart,
Or span long leagues apart,
So straight
These blessed things from heaven
Did mate
Their rarer essences to flesh, and leaven
Its clay with germs immaculate.

From thence upgrew
Forms beautiful and new :
Love-looks of maid, and lion-hearted grace
Of warrior youth ;
And silent haunting face
Of deep lore-seeking student ;
All and each
With one hand holding earth,
And one to reach
The Fatherland of truth.

But some were marred,
And some on stony place
Down-lighting took the nature of the stone ;
And some were scarred,
A stunted, sickly race,
Earth-prone.

'Then came I into being,
I, — heaven-sent, God-seeing ;
I, — unasking and unasked,
A spirit masked.

More hampered than the rest ?

I know not.

Wholly blest ?

Alas ! I trow not.

Only this I know :

I wept to come, as I shall weep to go —
As I shall weep to know that gate undone
Which shut me out of bliss,
When forth alone
I wandered into life,
And knew the kiss
Of mother's lips, and knew the heaving rest
Of sacred mother's breast.

How close I lay,
And yet my tears were rife.
How deep I drew
Of that sweet well, but knew
My soul from heaven shut out,
My weanèd spirit's drought.

As hedgeling flowers,

That with a wilful frailty take hold
Of stone, or stem, and climbing over-bold,
Tie juicy knots about the piercing thorn,
And think it rose-wood, so my tender youth
Made hurting fairy-bowers,
And troth was truth,
And never love forsworn.

Once when the rain
Had made the summer grass
Lean, heavy-headed, waiting for the scythe,
And all the trees were blithe
With wreathèd drops, that in a threaded chain
Hung round like beaded glass,
I took my way, joy-drifted, hither, thither,
Whence come or going whither
I cared not, only bent
On learning Nature's hidden sacrament.

The thicket leaves, that in the sturdy spring
Stood out awhile in tender folded strength,
Were lying smooth and pliant, length on length.
As wing to wing
A hovering flock of birds in marshalled flight
Makes shadowy dusk of artificial night,
So by the green was made

A tremulous bosky shade,
Where filtered lights stole in,
In dappled pools, or thin
As thread of silver laced
By leaves displaced.

In such a spot I, stooping low to see
The wonder of the dimness, and the way
The flickering sunbeams play,
Did sudden rest
My vagrant eye
Upon a dainty nest,
Close held in forkèd tree.

When joy is sad for over-joy,
Then love for over-love
Must needs employ
The agency of pain,
And hearts complain
For very comfort, as a dove,
Bliss-wooed,
Moans o'er her brood.

So when I see the gentle mossy thing,
Love-tented by the bosom of a bird,
The ready tears upspring,

And all my heart is stirred.
'And this,' I said, 'is peace, and this
The perfecting of bliss.'

Blame me not if I dreamed
That love was all,
For so indeed it seemed.
(Have I unlearned it yet,
Or do I still forget
The wormwood and the gall?)
Blame me not, you who know
The early matin glow
Of life, the sunrise hue
That warms the prudent blue,
And clothes the earth below
In royal red.
'O little bird,' I said,
'Most wise are you,
To make
So soft a bed.
Lie still,
And take
Your fill
Of blissful ease, and measure
Good by your treasure,
God in your pleasure,

And, for the rest,
Heaven in your nest.'

How long I stood I know not, held in trance
By that sweet vision, fearing lest perchance
My presence chase
The timid songster from its nesting-place.

But when at length
My eyes, that in the twilight of the tree
Saw only dimly, schooled themselves to see
With proper strength,
A sudden dread
Fell on my soul like lead.

So strangely still the little creature lay,
And turned no restless eye, as who should say,
With mother courage and with mother care,
'Though I should die, I dare.'
What if my bird were dead ?
I reached a hand
And moved the trailing ivy strand by strand ;
I touched the nest,
And laid a trembling finger on the breast,
That answered not with trembling. Then my ruth
Found sudden outlet, for I knew the truth.

‘There lies my heart,’ I wept, and here
I raised the gentle bird with wistful fear
Lo ! through the nest a thorn,
That, piercing deep,
Her heart had torn !
Why should I weep ?
One farthing would have bought her and her mate !
Yet could I hold as cheap
This augury of fate ?

Thenceforward walked I not, as other-while,
Sun-dazzled, seeing nothing but the smile
Of festive nature, for my secret heart
Knew where she wept in silence, and descried,
For all her broidered dress, an under side
Of broken threads, a tangled counterpart
She could no longer hide.

And now I know
Heaven is not compassed by this puny ball
A god might play with ; now indeed I find
Within the utmost limit of the mind
God-knowledge only guessed at, and the all
Of wisdom, but a ripple left behind
From that great overflow.

And life of earth
Is newly-quicken'd infancy, ere birth
Hath freed it into meaning.
So we fight,
And think our house a tomb,
And wonder at the darkness, or upleap
Like Baptist John, impatient for the sight
Of Baby Jesus, who was still asleep
In gentle Mary's womb.

Behold a day
When one on earth shall say,
'She died,'
But on the other side
Shall one cry out,
'A babe is born !'
Ah ! in that time of change,
That country new and strange,
For evermore
Father me God, and leave me not forlorn,
A naked foundling on a friendless shore !

GOD FOR GOD.

‘GOD and love,’ I said,
 ‘If it be the two agree,
 It still is for the dead,
 God and love,’ I said.

‘Love,’ I said, ‘and God,
 Thus reversed, if love be first,
 It moulders in the sod,
 Love,’ I said, ‘and God

‘Therefore,’ said I, weeping,
 ‘As of erst, let God be first,
 And love be in His keeping.’
 This I said with weeping.

So for love of love
 I took down my love’s new crown
 And worshipped God above,
 Still for love of love.

‘Fear thee not, my son,’
Said the Blessèd ; ‘thus confessèd
Love and God are one ;
Fear thee not, my son.’

Now with God for god,
Yet not lost the love I crossed,
Blossoms clothe the rod,
Now with God for god.

PERSEVERANDO.

WE live in many worlds in this one ball,
And each man's world is as himself doth make
it.

He who doth find the globe compressed and small
Must beat against the shell until he break it.
He yet shall find when he has broken through
That his small world is girded by a greater,
Which if he persevere and grow unto
Shall open to his knock a little later.

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